

Class Title: Family Health History – Know your past protect your future.

Class Topic: Family Health History.

Class sub topic: The basics of family health history. What you need to know and how to get started.

Objectives: WIC Participants will:

1. Recognize what a family health history is.
2. Be able to explain why a family health history is important.
3. Understand that genetics is not destiny.

Materials Needed:

- Family Traits and Traditions activity.
- Family History triangle.
- Paper and pencils.
- Collecting a family health history is easy handout.

Ice Breaker:

Family Traits and Traditions. Adapt the activity so that “the family” is the people in the class.

Class Counseling Points/Facilitated Group Discussion Question

1. What things does my family share that can affect my health? – Use this question with the Ice Breaker.
2. What is a family health history?
3. Why should I know my family health history?
4. What are some health problems that can run in families?
5. If my mom has diabetes, does that mean I will get it too?
6. How do I collect a family health history?

Possible Responses to Questions:

1. What things does my family share that can affect my health? (Ask question before showing triangle).

- Families share many things.
- Families share their genetics, environment, and habits. All these can affect your health.
 - Genetics.
 - How does genetics affect our health?
 - Genes tell our bodies how to make proteins. Proteins make our bodies run.
 - Genes are passed down from parents to kids.
 - Some genes may not work right, which can cause disease.
 - Environment.
 - Contact with agents in the food, air, or water.
 - So how do genes and environment work together? Families who have asthma may live close to a freeway, which could trigger asthma attacks.

They may already have a high risk for asthma because it runs in their family.

- Habits.
 - Our habits have a great affect on our health, no matter what our family health history is!
 - Habits that affect our health are:
 - Poor diet.
 - Lack of exercise.
 - Being overweight.
 - Smoking.
- So how do all of these risk factors tie together? (Show triangle).
 - Think of these risk factors like a triangle. This can help us see why we need to know our family health history. Our genes act with our habits and our environment to cause disease. This is what a family health history is! Even though we may not be able to change our genes, we can change our habits and environment. This can lower our chance of getting a problem that runs in our family.

2. What is a family health history?

- It's a family's shared genes, environment and habits.

3. Why should I know my family health history?

- Health problems can run in families.
- When family members have the same health problem or get a problem at a young age, this can make other family members' risk high.
- We all can be affected by our family health history.
- Families share more than just genes. They also share their environment and habits.
- Family Health History helps your Doctor know what test or habits you need to stay healthy.

4. What are some health problems that can run in families?

- Heart disease.
- Stroke.
- Asthma.
- Cancer.
- Diabetes.
- Depression.
- Pregnancy problems.

5. If my mom has diabetes, does that mean I will get it too?

- No!
- We can make healthy choices to lower our risk.
- We can't change our genes but we can change our habits!

- Just because a health problem runs in your family does not mean you will get that problem. You have control over the choices you make. Things you can do are:
 - Talk to your doctor about what tests you need.
 - Eat healthy foods.
 - Exercise and be at a healthy weight.
 - Quit smoking.

6. How do I collect a family health history?

- Collect a family health history from:
 - Kids.
 - Parents.
 - Brother and sisters.
 - Grandparents.
 - Aunts and Uncles.
- If you are adopted it is still important to know your family health history. Look at the habits your family shares rather than the genes.
- Ask your family about:
 - Health problems they have had.
 - How old they were when it started.
 - For family members who have died, how old they were when they died and what they died from.
 - Lifestyle habits.
- Three easy steps for collecting your family health history:
 - Talk about it.
 - Write it down.
 - Share it with your doctor and family.

Conclusion Activity: Even if you have a health problem in your family it may not mean you are going to get it too. What can you do to stay healthy?

- Have the class write down ideas for making healthy choices.
 - What are your health habits now?
 - What can you do better?
 - Are there tests you can ask your doctor about?

Have them come up with two goals for keeping their family healthy.

Information for the Instructor:

- Someone may wonder if they are at risk for getting health problems that run in their family. Here are some “red flags” that may mean that a person is at high risk of getting a health problem that runs in their family.
 - Getting the problem at a young age. The earlier a person gets a health problem, the more likely it is caused by genetics. A good rule of thumb is if a family member gets the health problem 10-20 years before most people then you are at high risk for getting that health problem also.

- Two or more family members with the same health problem.
 - Disease that occurs in the less often affected sex. (For example, having a male family member with breast cancer.)
 - Having related health problem in your family. (For example, having diabetes and heart disease in your family.)
- For more information contact the Chronic Disease Genomics Program genomics@utah.gov or visit our website www.health.utah.gov/genomics.

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Lesson Assessment
Please complete and Return to the WIC Nutritionist

1. Was this lesson easy to understand?

___Yes ___No

2. Was this lesson helpful to you?

___Yes ___No

3. Would you change anything about this lesson?

___Yes ___No

4. Will you collect a family health history?

___Yes ___No

5. What additional information do you need?
